

61. *Tschusi on the Ornithological Literature of Austria-Hungary for 1909.*

[Ornithologische Literatur Oesterreich-Ungarns, 1909. Von Victor R. v. Tschusi zu Schmidhoffen. Verh. k.-k. zool.-bot. Wien, Jahrg. 1910, pp. 432-463.]

This is a complete List of the ornithological publications issued in Austria-Hungary in 1909, and will be useful to those who are working on subjects connected with the Birds of that part of Europe. The author has received assistance from various friends who are acquainted with Hungarian, Croatian, and Czech, in which languages some of the communications are written.

XIV.—*Letters, Extracts, and Notes.*

WE have received the following letters addressed to the Editors:—

SIRS,—A few notes on my route during the last nine months and on my plans for next year may be of interest to the readers of 'The Ibis.' In May last, along with my companions, Messrs. Miller and Price, I travelled through Siberia to the Yenisei River, and spent several months in exploring its head-waters in the Syansk and Tannu-ola mountain-ranges.

We found this district, although within the Chinese Empire and on the threshold of Mongolia, to be quite Siberian in character and to possess a Siberian fauna. Forests of larch, spruce, birch, and Scotch fir, interspersed with meadow-lands, and watered by fine rivers, stretch as far south as the Tannu-ola Mountains, and this range (lat. 51°) forms the true "divide" between the Siberian and Mongolian faunas. I made a small collection of birds, which includes examples of the following, among other species:—Ptarmigan, Brown Partridge, Hazel-Grouse, Great Black Woodpecker, Capercaillie, Black-throated Thrush, Golden Oriole, Cross-bill, and various other species. The spring migration was on the whole rather later than it is in England.

The existence of Sable, Beaver, Reindeer, and Moose also shews the affinities that this district possesses to Siberia.

On leaving Arctic waters and entering Mongolia proper I immediately perceived a change in the fauna.

Traversing the district between Lake Ubsa and the Altai Mountains, we found the high ranges very wealthy in bird- and animal-life. The steppe-country was on the whole very lifeless, but the lakes swarmed with birds. The following were noted on the Atchit Nor :—Wild Geese (three species), Mallard, Teal, Wild Swan, Grey Phalarope, Golden Plover (in full summer dress), Black Stork, Gulls, Terns, Black Vulture, Pallas's Sand-Grouse, Kites, Tree-Sparrows, and Horned Larks.

By September we had crossed the Great Altai and entered Dzungaria. Travelling by way of the Upper Black Irtysh, Lake Ulungar, and the Sair Mountain, we reached Chuguchak, and thence, by way of the Ala-tau and Sairam Nor, the Ili Valley and Kuldja. During the last part of this journey I had neither time nor opportunity to collect. But I recorded a certain number of birds during this long journey through this the most *bird-less* country that I have ever seen ; there seemed to be little else but immense flocks of Pallas's Sand-Grouse and a few Horned Larks.

Here the winter migration and the comparison of the winter conditions of the Ili Valley with those of the Zarafschan much interested me. The difference is remarkable. Although but very little further north, the Ili Valley is frost-bound for three or four months, all the rivers are frozen and the snow lies deep, whilst in the Zarafschan I collected specimens throughout the winter. Wildfowl are here comparatively scarce, but the lower Zarafschan forms an immense winter-resort for Ducks, Geese, Waders, &c.

In January I shall start eastwards again, going, *via* Urumchi and Dufar, to Hami. *En route* I hope to collect on the Bogdo-ola and Hami Mountains, and also on further journeys which I expect to make into the Gobi, east of Hami.

I hope to be in England next autumn. From here I am sending off a small collection to the British Museum and hope it will get through safely.

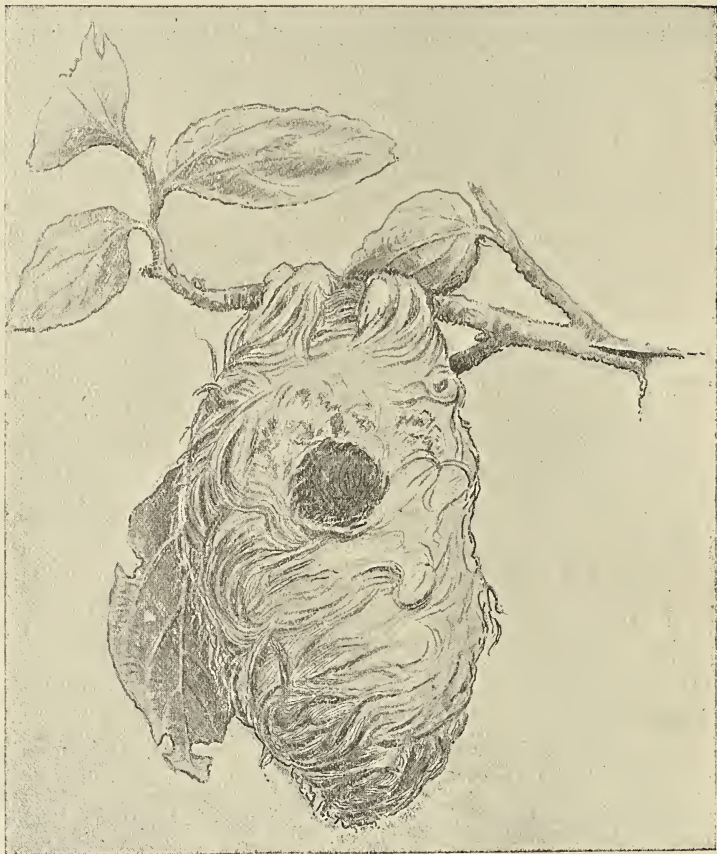
I am, Sirs,  
Yours &c.,

DOUGLAS CARRUTHERS.

Kuldja,  
Chinese Dzungaria,  
Central Asia.  
Dec. 27th, 1910.

SIRS,—Whilst up the West River in South China along with Lieut.-Commander R. E. Vaughan, of H.M.S. 'Moorhen,' we took a nest of the lovely little Flowerpecker *Dicaeum cruentatum*, at How-lik, on August 19th, 1906, with five

Text-fig. 10.



Nest of *Dicaeum cruentatum*.

newly-hatched young. The nest, of which I enclose a sketch (text-fig. 10), is made of fine strips of the inner bark of trees, with a few other fibres, and is bound together with the silky pappus of *Bombax ceiba*, and lined with the same material. The length of the nest is about  $4\frac{1}{2}$  inches and its diameter about  $2\frac{1}{4}$ , outside measurements.

Another nest of this bird, taken with eggs on July 7th,



1907, was almost entirely made of the *Bombax* seed-silk, emmeshed on the exterior with the inner bark of trees in very long and narrow strips. The nest is hung high up in a large tree at the end of a slender bough, and being so small and well concealed with leaves is very difficult to detect. The eggs are white and not very glossy.

I am, Sirs,

Yours &c.,

J. C. KERSHAW, F.Z.S.

SIRS,—May I venture to trespass on your valuable space to call attention to the increase of papers of late years in the 'Ibis' which are little more than catalogues of skins, and to suggest that collectors should make more field-notes on the birds they observe, and that those who work out the collections should pay more attention to states of plumage and any addition to our knowledge there may be as to the status of any species in any locality? I am quite aware that collections are frequently made under very adverse circumstances, but pencils and note-books are not much to carry, while habits, numbers, food, &c., and the state of the sexual organs would not take long to record.

Others points to which I should like to call attention are the desirability of collecting our European summer migrants in their winter-quarters and of recording as much information about them as possible, and to the advisability of collecting specimens in moult.

These subjects appear to be rather neglected and overshadowed by the glamour of discovering new species, which, however interesting it may be, after all is not everything in Ornithology.

I am, Sirs,

Yours &c.,

CLAUD B. TICEHURST.

Lowestoft,  
March 13th, 1911.

SIRS,—You asked me to write you a "birdy" letter from this island. I have just returned from an expedition into the central forests, where I was fortunate enough to discover the headquarters of *Fringilla teydea polatzeki*. I think, therefore, you may care for a short account of this interesting

Finch. I forget if you have been in the south of Gran Canaria, but if so, you will remember that the pine-forests cover a large extent of ground, and on the ride from Juncal to the Cueva de las Ninas the mule-path winds through pines almost all the way. Juncal, which is a very small village, consisting of a few straggling houses, is situated in a deep barranca 3600 ft. above the sea.

Higher up again, at 4000 ft., the Pinar Pajonal commences, and here it is that I found the Finches to be most plentiful, but even in these pines they are very locally distributed. As we rode through these forests on the 5th of February we saw about six or eight pairs of it—a week later none were to be seen there at all; so I imagine they move about in small parties through the forests, in a similar manner to the Tits. This is an extremely silent bird, and the note did not appear to be nearly so loud as that of our English Chaffinch, though, from the original account of the species by Capt. Polatzek, it would appear to be a great deal more pronounced. It is often to be seen on the ground beneath the pines, diligently searching amongst the pine-needles, and when suddenly disturbed flies silently into a tree close at hand, shewing very little fear. Most of the birds seen near Juncal were in pairs, but I met with several single cock birds in the forests near the Cueva de las Ninas: the latter were absolutely silent. The ovaries of two females dissected contained very minute eggs and the testes of the males were small. I imagine that these birds are rather late breeders, and the local shepherds and Guardias, who were intimate with the bird, informed me that they had found the nests in April. I obtained three pairs of these Chaffinches for the British Museum, and I hope now they will be allowed to increase in peace: you may be sure I shall do all I can out here to keep their hiding-place a secret from wandering collectors!

I am, Sirs,

Yours &c.,

Gran Canaria,  
Feb. 6th, 1911.

DAVID A. BANNERMAN.

*Birds of the Central Sahara.*—In the interesting narrative of his journey from Tripoli to Bornu across the Central Sahara, Mr. Vischer writes at the oasis of Bilma (now

occupied by the French):—"Around these delicious pools our boys caught many ducks; these birds seem to come from the south; they flop down exhausted at the edge of the water, and the villagers catch them whenever they feel inclined. The nearest open water to the south is Lake Chad, three hundred and fifty miles away.

"These ducks at Bilma, the many smaller birds which we picked up farther north, and the Quails we saw near Budduma, prove I think sufficiently that the Sahara is constantly crossed by flights of birds migrating from the Central African countries to the north, and a systematic study of the matter would, no doubt, throw fresh light on many interesting facts concerning their habits. Besides the ducks we saw no birds in the oasis except the Common Vulture, the Hawk, and great numbers of the white and black variety of Raven, which is also met with in Nigeria."

So far as we know, this is a district to which no Ornithologist has as yet ever penetrated. It could, however, we suppose, be reached with the help of the French authorities in Algeria.

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*Introduction of Paradise-birds into the West Indies.*—From an article in the last number of the 'Avicultural Magazine' (ser. 3, vol. ii. p. 142) we learn that Sir William Ingram has acquired an island in the West Indies (Little Tobago) for the purpose of acclimatizing Paradise-birds, and thus preserving them from the utter extinction which will certainly befall them unless some steps are taken to guard them from destruction. Out of 56 living examples of *Paradisæa apoda*, brought from the Aru Islands by the late Mr. Stalker, 48 were set free on Sir William's uninhabited island, and placed under the care of an "intelligent Swiss sailor," Robert Herold. We trust that this experiment may prove successful, and that the birds may thrive and breed in their new quarters. At the same time we venture to express an opinion that one of the smaller Aru Islands would perhaps have been a more suitable repository for these precious birds, which are, of course, utterly foreign to the Neotropical Avifauna and quite ignorant of the proper food to be eaten by them in the West Indies. We quite agree, however, with



the Editor of the 'Avicultural Magazine,' that Sir William Ingram's experiment in attempting to preserve for posterity one of the most beautiful of living creatures is worthy of our highest commendation.

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*The Expedition of the B. O. U. into Central New Guinea.*—Since we last wrote on this subject (above, p. 186) we are glad to say that Mr. Walter Goodfellow, who, as we announced, had been compelled to give up the leadership of the Expedition in consequence of renewed attacks of severe fever, has returned safely to England. He has nearly recovered his health and was able to be present at the Meeting of the B.O.C. on March 15th, where, we need hardly say, he met with a very cordial reception. He has brought back with him the first collection of bird-skins, altogether about 1000 in number. This collection, having been formed at a comparatively low level, could hardly be expected to contain many novelties. But in it are several males and a single female of the magnificent *Xanthomelus ardens*\*, and other specimens that when examined will probably turn out to be new to science.

Under its present commander the Expedition is making good progress up the Iwaka River, which, it is positively stated, draws its water from the snows of Mount Carstensz. A strong and reliable reinforcement of carriers has been made by the accession of forty Dyaks from Borneo, under the command of Mr. Bernard Kloss, Curator of the Kuala Lampor Museum in the Federated Malay States, who has obtained four months' leave in order to join the Expedition.

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*The Annual General Meeting of the B. O. U.*—We are requested to call attention to the approaching Annual General Meeting of the Union, which has been fixed by the Committee for Wednesday, May the 10th, and will be held (by permission) in the Zoological Society's Office, Regent's Park, at 4.30 P.M. The usual dinner after the Meeting will be held at 7 P.M., at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, in conjunction with that of the British Ornithologists' Club.

\* See above, p. 353.